

Prejudice and Pistols:
Gun Owner Identity, Racial Resentment and Subsequent Attitudes toward Guns

By

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B.A., Calvin College, 2017

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Political Science and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in
Political Science.

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Date Defended: 28 November 2018

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the following master's thesis:

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Date Approved: 28 November 2018

Abstract:

The national debate surrounding gun ownership and racial attitudes has only intensified over the last several years. Using social identity theory and racial resentment theory, I argue a distinct, gun owner identity exists and is associated with racial attitudes. In particular, I hypothesize that when gun owner identity is high, so too are levels of racial resentment. I further hypothesize that when gun owners are primed to think about race, they express attitudes regarding gun control contradictory to that which we would expect; in ways that seem contrary to their self-interest. Through an analysis of a University of Kansas survey, I develop an innovative measure of gun owner identity. I then use both traditional measures of racial resentment and an embedded experiment within a survey to test my hypotheses. My results suggest that gun owners, and gun owners with higher gun owner identities, are indeed more likely to be racially resentful. Additionally, when primed to think about race, gun owners will exhibit discrimination toward minority gun owners and display policy attitudes opposite to those expressed when they are not primed to think about race. I conclude with a discussion of the implications these results hold for public policy and broader American culture.

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Introduction

The racial divide among gun owners in this country is made especially clear when observing the aftermath of the November 12th shooting in the Chicago suburbs. A black security guard, Jemel Robertson, was shot and killed by the police after working to detain a suspect believed to be involved in a shooting who entered the bar he was working at. The tragedy has inspired national outrage, with individuals questioning why this “good guy with a gun” had to die.

This devastating event takes place only a few years after gun ownership and race took the center stage due to the fatal shooting of Philando Castile on July 6, 2016. Castile, a legal gun owner and a black man, was fatally shot by a police officer while his girlfriend and daughter sat in the car. The police officer’s fear was heightened when Castile informed him of the legally-owned gun present in the vehicle, and as the situation quickly escalated, a young man was left dead. Less than a year later, the police officer was acquitted. The NRA’s silence on the situation led to national outrage, with minority gun owners wondering why their rights were not being represented by the nation’s largest gun-rights organization. The chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Representative Cedric Richmond, said that the verdict and the gun community’s silence signaled to African Americans that “the Second Amendment does not apply to them” (Selk 2017). This leads me to ask, what is the relationship between race, gun ownership, and public attitudes toward guns?

This study seeks to understand the role that gun ownership and gun owner identity plays in racial resentment and whether racial attitudes influence attitudes about gun regulation. I explore the social roots of divergent attitudes toward race. I argue that gun owners

possess a distinct gun owner identity that is experienced to varying strengths. I hypothesize that when gun owners possess stronger gun owner identities, they will also be more likely to have higher levels of racial resentment. Moreover, when gun owners are primed to think about race, they experience shifting attitudes that contradict the expected response. I begin with a review of relevant literature, before moving to an explanation of my data and methods, a summary of my results, and a discussion on the implications of my research.

Theoretical Framework

I explore the literature on social identity theory, racial resentment, and the relationship between racial attitudes and gun ownership in order to answer my theoretical questions of interest: how do social identities and their varying strengths influence attitudes toward race? Are gun owners with higher gun owning identities more racially resentful? When primed to think about race, do gun owners' attitudes toward gun policy change? The following literature review highlights a distinct gap in the literature that my research hopes to fill.

Social Identity Theory

Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) argue that an individual's system of self-reference is derived from his or her membership within a group. They claim that these social categorizations necessitate a process distinguishing in-groups and out-groups, or understandings of "us and them." This membership within a group generates a social identity, which can become a driving force of behavior.

Generating a group identity first requires an objective basis for membership, i.e. gun owners versus non-gun owners. The individual then transitions from experiencing shared membership to shared identification. Individuals experience this identification to varying

degrees. For gun ownership to be elevated as a significant identity, gun owners must hold a sense of attachment to the group and their group identity (Conover 1984). This attachment drives members to maintain group status and further group power, in turn advancing one's own self-status (Huddy 2001a).

While little has been done defining gun ownership as a distinct social identity, there is a robust literature on gun culture in America (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2001; Hofstadter 1970; Joslyn et al. 2017; Kahan and Braman 2003; Spitzer 2012; Wright 1995). From this culture, the social categorizations of gun owners have emerged. They are often white, male and Republican (Parker et al. 2017). They value individualism, independence and power (Kahan and Braman 2003). The group often has shared activities and participates in an “unexpectedly inclusionary project of gun carry” (Carlson 2015, 167). Gun owners do not significantly differ along the lines of the utility of their guns, but rather share an attachment to the machine itself, deriving a source of identity from it (Celinska 2007; Mencken and Froese 2017).

As a group, gun owners are political, forming seemingly self-interested attitudes around gun control and gun violence blame attribution (Joslyn and Haider-Markel 2017; Wolpert and Gimpel 1998). Their objective membership in the group is politically prognostic, capable of predicting voting decisions and political ideologies (Celinska 2007; Joslyn et al. 2017). While owning a gun, or having objective membership within that distinct group, can be understood as a political identity, little is understood about the effect of identity strength.

Measurement of Social Identities

Studying gun ownership as a distinct social identity is a new approach. Methods of measurement must therefore be derived from studies of other social identities. First, objective membership within the gun owning group can simply be measured by asking participants if they own a gun. This element of a gun-oriented identity is significant, as it addresses one of Huddy's (2001a) main concerns with Social Identity Theory. She highlights that a weakness of the literature arises in the assignment of members to groups without accounting for their decision to identify as a group member. Gun ownership is a choice and therefore members of the group self-select participation. "Identity choice matters," she shares, highlighting its ability to "enhance the development of ingroup cohesion" (2001a, 138). When it comes to strength of that identity, however, measurement is not as simple. Often, scholars regard social identity in "a rather static and passive way – namely as a correlate of a particular group membership" (Doosje, Spears, and Ellemers 2002, 58). This approach would see social identity as a merely a reflection of group membership. For example, assuming gun owners share a social identity simply because they are all gun owners. Bertjan Doosje and his co-authors (2002) represent a group of scholars that measure identity differently, distinguishing between the highly committed and less committed group members, focusing on their psychological attachment to the group to which they belong.

Objective membership in a group is an inadequate measurement of identity. Leonne Huddy explains as a distinction between belonging to an identity category and having that identity category mean something to your sense of self. She states (2001a, 142) , "When group identities are acquired, the meaning of group membership may have a powerful influence over the voluntary adoption of identity and its consequences once acquired." Focusing on identity

meaning rather than just identity boundaries allows for a study of the impact of identity strength. Gun ownership may matter more to some gun owner's identity than others. By measuring identity scalarly, I allow for varying identity strength, something the literature has identified as significant (Barth 1981; Huddy 2001b; Jenkins 1996).

Salience of Identities

Strength of gun owners' identity can increase when members within that group are reminded of their identity. A variety of contextual factors can determine the amount of attention that identity receives, with one scenario being the perceived vulnerability of the in-group. In other words, social identities can become salient or activated in climates of threat or perceived threat (Doosje, Spears, and Ellemers 2002; Miller and Conover 2015; Stets and Burke 2000; Zhang and Reid 2013). This threat tends to elevate that identity in the hierarchy of group memberships. Heightened salience has the power to propel groups into political thinking (Conover 1988), trigger stronger reactions to political threat (Zhang and Reid 2013), and inspire collective responses (Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears 1995).

Most Americans believe society to have a negative view of gun owners (Parker et al. 2017). Moreover, gun policy, gun violence and gun owners are receiving increased attention in news media (Gun Control and the Media 2013). The coupling of these factors leads to a heightened group status and a corresponding highly salient identity (Huddy 2001), vulnerable and threatened by the posture of the out-group: those seemingly anti-gun. This perceived status shift leads to the further intensification of group attachment and collective belief (Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears 1999).

Racial Resentment Defined

Guns owners are often assumed to be racially resentful, due to a variety of historical and cultural narratives (Kleck 1996). Racial resentment can be understood as a new form of racism. A concept developed by Kinder and Sanders (1996), racial resentment is often defined as whites believing that blacks are receiving something undeserved. The scholars drew from the robust literature on symbolic racism to develop their theory (McConahay and Hough 1976; Sears 1988; Sears and Kinder 1971), being especially influenced by Kinder and Sears (1981:416) who frame the attitude as containing a moralistic resentment toward blacks for seemingly violating “such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience and discipline.” Racial resentment is said to offer whites a socially acceptable way to express their prejudice (McConahay and Hough 1976).

Racial resentment is often ideological (Hughes 1997), influencing whites’ racial policy views. Bobo (2000) concludes that racial resentment significantly predicts individual opinions on affirmative action. Tuch and Hughes (2011) find that whites who are racially resentful reject certain principles of racial equality and further confirm the work of past studies that racial resentment is an important predictor of racial policies (Hughes 1997; Tuch and Hughes 1996a, 1996b).

Racial resentment influences policy opinions in other arenas as well, including the payment of college athletes (Wallsten et al. 2017), health care reform (Henderson and Hillygus 2011) and immigration (Berg 2013). It has been used to explain white attitudes toward campaigns (Mendelberg 2001) and evaluations of the Obama presidency (Tesler and Sears 2010). Notably, the literature also considers the role racial resentment plays in forming gun policy opinions. O’Brien and his co-authors (2013) conclude racial resentment influences

concealed carry support. Filindra and Kaplan (2016) find that racial resentment is a significant predictor of white opposition to gun control, noting that anti-gun control proponents use the same individualistic language as that which evokes racial resentment. Their results are further confirmed in a study extended to include minorities, with racial prejudice negatively correlating with gun control support among both whites and Latinos (Filindra and Kaplan 2017).

Racial Resentment Measured

Mendelberg (2001) provides extensive information on the measurement of racial resentment. She explicates the four major racial resentment items that survey participants ought to respond to in order to measure resentment. Responses are measured on a five-point Likert scale, with counterbalancing to prevent acquiescence bias, and ought to be stated as follows:

1. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
2. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
3. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.
4. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

Mendelberg (2001, 131) explains that “these items are affectively charged, they contain an internal attribution for racial inequality, they explicitly refer to blacks, and they directly implicate traditional standards of conduct such as self-reliance. Therefore, they are powerful.”

Her approach is derived from the work of Kinder and Sanders (1996) and is widely utilized in the racial resentment literature.

Racial Resentment and Gun Ownership

There is a robust literature on race and gun ownership. One camp within the literature discusses race and gun ownership as a demographic fact, with minorities being far less likely to own a firearm than whites (Geier, Kern, and Geier 2017; Kleck and Kovandzic 2009a; Wright and Marston 1975). A second camp within the literature talks about the racism embedded in America's gun culture (Cramer 1994; Felson and Pare 2010; Filindra and Kaplan 2016; O'Brien et al. 2013; Primm, Regoli, and Hewitt 2009; Young 1985, 1989). For the sake of this study, I focus on the latter, which continually highlights the relationship between racial attitudes, gun ownership, and gun policy preferences.

Gap in the Literature

The literature has failed to consider the potential of a distinct gun owner identity and the implications that such an identity can have for racial attitudes. Gun ownership – and I argue by extension gun owner identity – is often linked to feelings of racial resentment. As this narrative grows more prominent, it is important to understand the reality of this link. Does gun ownership significantly impact levels of racial resentment? Do those with a seemingly higher gun owner identity hold high racially resentful views? When primed to think about race, do gun owners shift their opinions toward policy? This study seeks to answer these questions and fill this critical gap in the literature.

Hypotheses

My primary goal of this study is to examine whether gun ownership, gun identity, racial resentment, and gun policy attitudes are related. After reviewing the relevant literature, three significant hypotheses remain.

First, I hypothesize that gun ownership is positively related to racial resentment. This hypothesis flows from the literature (O'Brien et al. 2013; Young 1985), but requires further confirmation.

Second, I hypothesize that gun owner identity strength is positively related to racial resentment. This hypothesis stands to test the usefulness of the gun owner identity scale, as well as nuance the relationship between gun ownership and racial resentment.

Third, I expect that under conditions where race and guns are salient, gun owners will be more supportive of gun regulation. I will test for this hypothesis through an experiment embedded in a survey.

Data and Methods

Data

I utilize the University of Kansas Gun Owner Population survey in order to study the relationship between racial resentment, gun ownership and gun policy. This survey was recruited by Survey Sampling International (SSI) who invited participants to complete the survey via email from June 28 – July 1, 2017. 32,140 invitations were sent, 3,214 began the survey (10% response rate) and 2,089 (65%) completed the entire survey. The demographic characteristics of this panel closely resemble that of the United States population on all major demographic traits. Gun owners are oversampled and an experiment is embedded in the survey.

I subscribe to Filindra's and Kaplan's (2016) and O'Brien's and co-authors' (2013) approach of including only white survey participants in my analysis. Due to my focus on racial resentment in my study, this decision is appropriate. By dropping the observations of all nonwhite participants, my sample size shrunk to 1,665. 43.72% of white respondents were gun owners, 49.19% were male, 36.52% were Southern, and 36.62% were Republican.

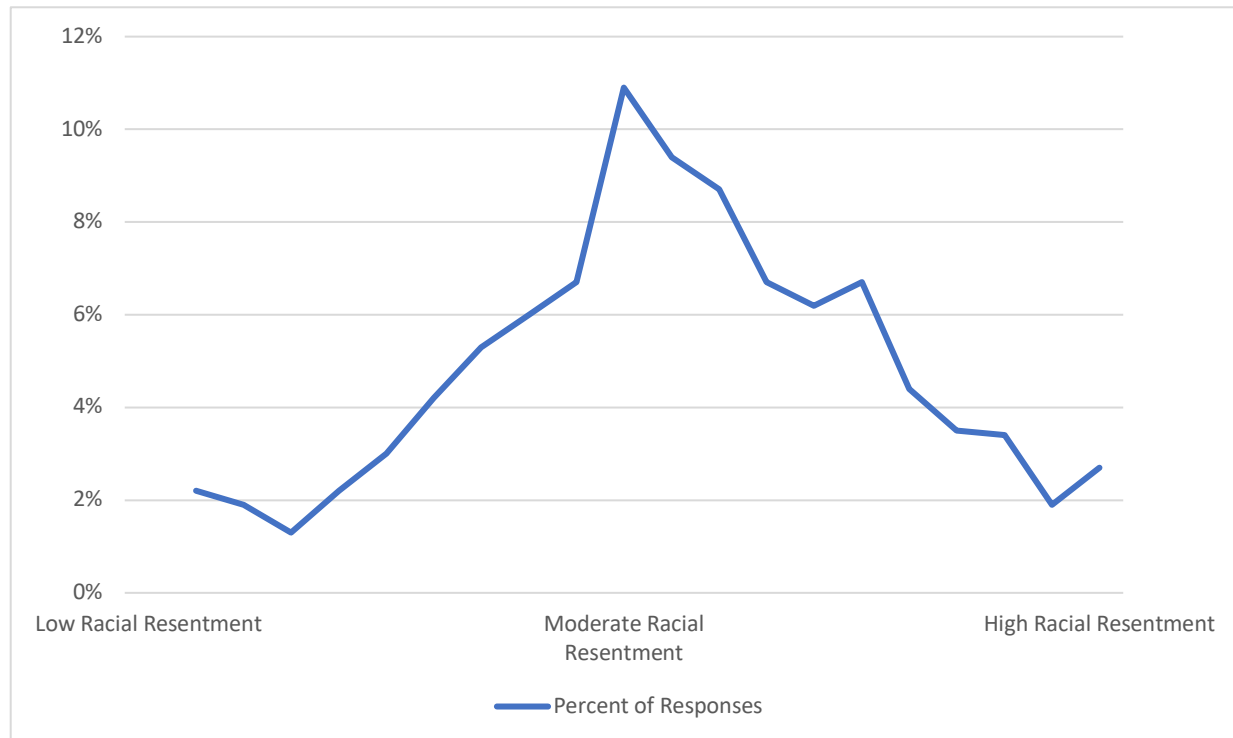
Variables

Dependent Variables

I have two dependent variables. Firstly, I measure the effect of gun ownership on racial resentment. I generate a racial resentment scale using the following five statements: 1. "Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors," 2. "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class," 3. "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve," 4. "Blacks are demanding too much too fast," and 5. "Blacks no longer face much prejudice or discrimination." Notably, three out of the five statements match Mendelberg's (2001) approach, with the latter two being added at the survey designers' discretion. The participants responded to the statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, with counterbalancing to prevent acquiescence bias. I recoded the statement responses so that they were consistent directionally, with higher scores indicating higher levels of racial resentment. I created the scale additively. The questions loaded onto one factor with an eigenvalue of 2.9396. Cronbach's Alpha is 0.8238. The scale ranges from 1 - 21, with 1 being

the lowest level of racial resentment. The distribution of racial resentment is presented below in Figure 1.

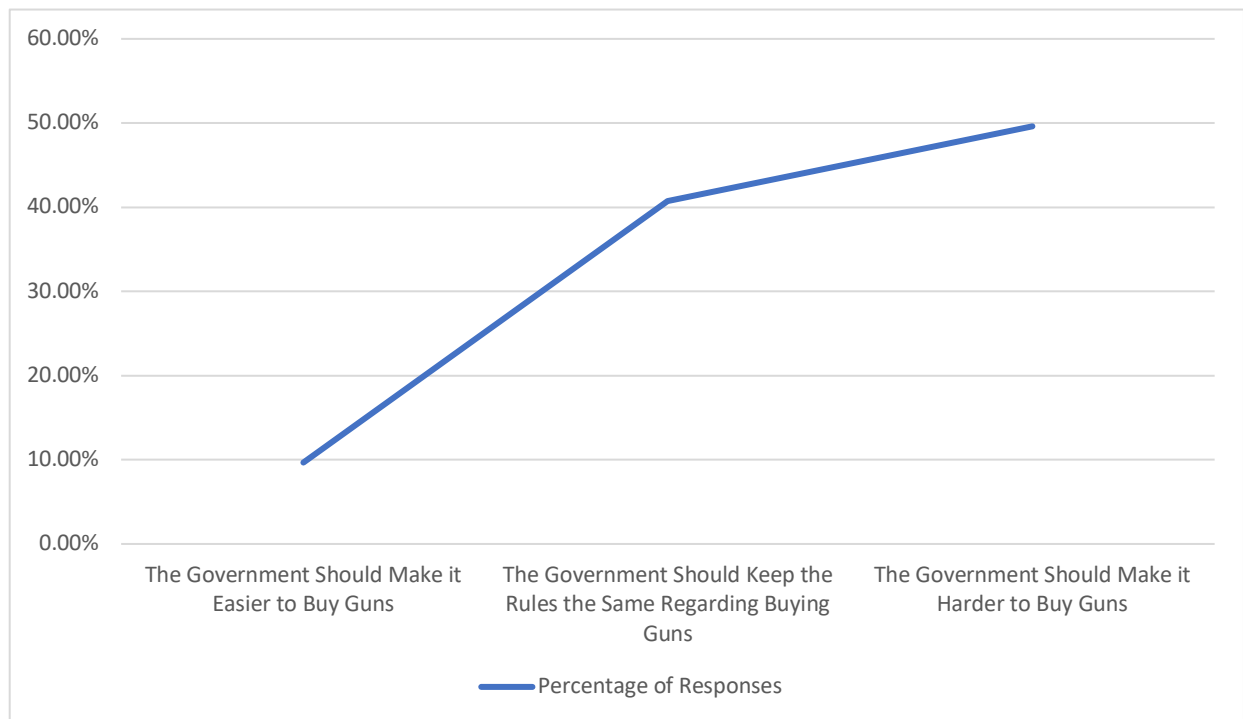
Figure 1: Racial Resentment Distribution



My second dependent variable measures attitudes toward gun regulation. It uses the question, “Do you think the federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun than it is now, make it easier for people to buy a gun, or keep these rules about the same as they are now?” The question was asked following an embedded experiment and attempts to measure if racial priming influences gun policy attitudes. The experiment was conducted as follows: The participants were either shown a blue square, a light-skinned man holding a gun, or a dark-skinned man holding a gun. Approximately one third of participants (560) received the control condition, one third (563) received the condition of a light-skinned man holding a gun, and one third (542) received the condition of a dark-skinned man holding a gun. The experiment occurred in the middle of the survey. The answers to the question of interest were

coded 1, 2, or 3 with 1 representing a call for the government to make it easier to buy guns, 2 representing a call for the rules to stay the same, and 3 representing a call for the government to make it more difficult to buy guns. The distribution of gun access responses is presented below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Gun Access Question Distribution

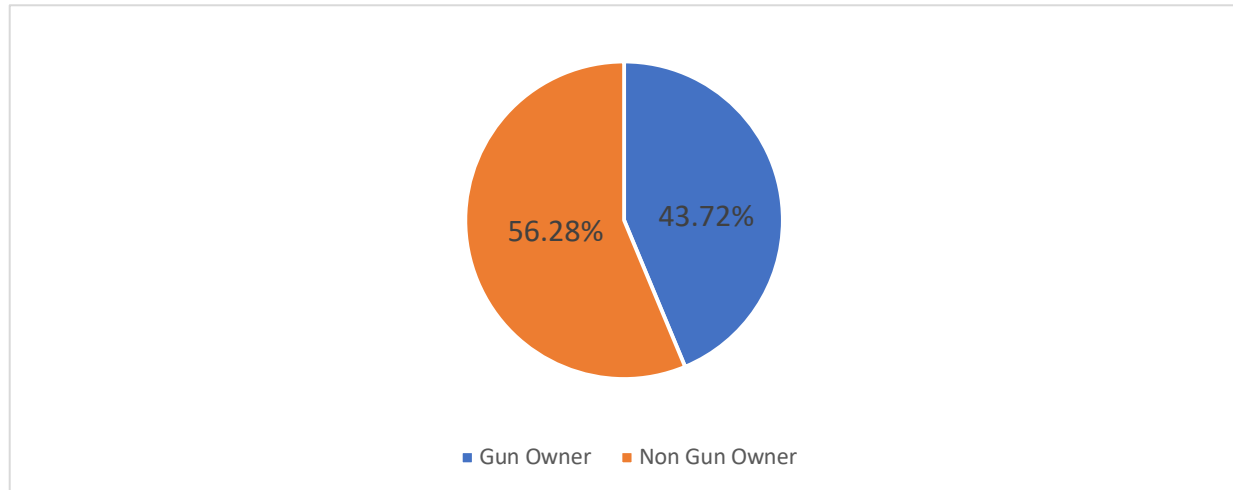


Independent Variables

My chief independent variables are gun ownership, the gun identity scale, and the experimental condition of an image of a dark-skinned man holding a gun. The first, gun ownership, is measured using the question “Do you or does someone else keep a gun or rifle in your home?” The respondents were coded 1 if the respondent answered yes and the gun belonged to the respondent and 0 for all other answers. Due to the nature of the survey which oversampled gun owners, 43.72% of white respondents reported owning a gun themselves, as

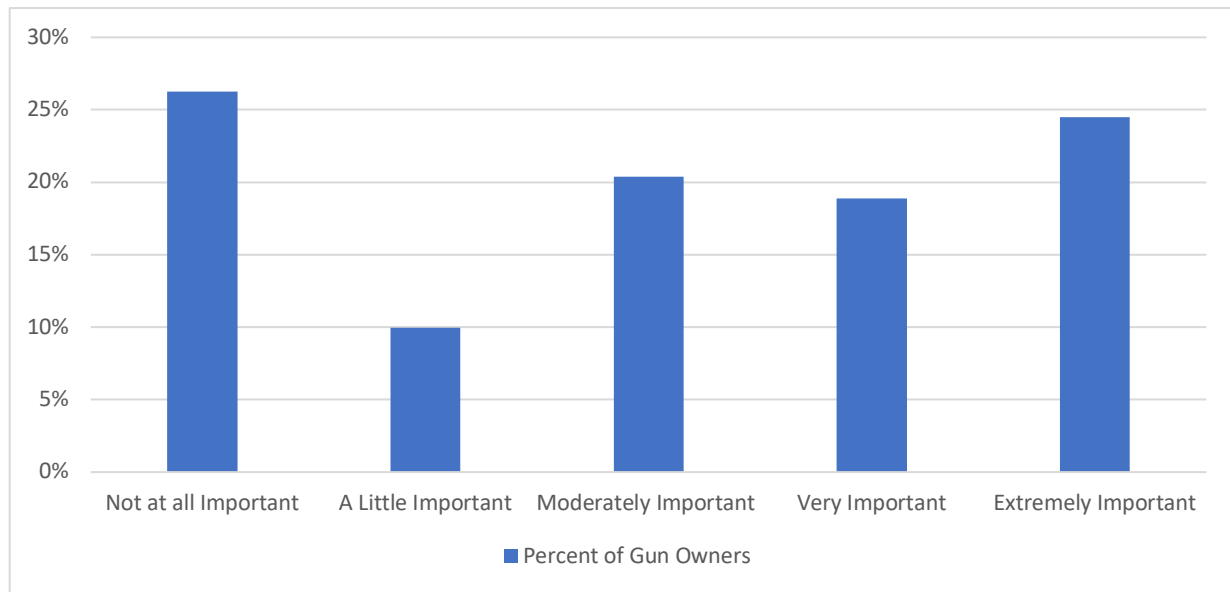
presented in Figure 3. Of those respondents, 52.99% reported being male, 48.68% were Southern, and 61.51% were Republican.

Figure 3: Gun Ownership



My second independent variable, gun ownership identity, could be captured multiple ways. The survey asks all gun owners (non-gun owners were not asked) the following question: “How important is being a gun-owner to your identity?” The distribution of responses is represented below in Figure 4. Nearly 44% of all gun owners say that owning a gun is either very or extremely important to their identity.

Figure 4: Gun Owner Identity



I choose to generate a gun owner identity scale apart from this initial question using the following 4 questions, to which respondents answered on a 6-point Likert Scale: “My gun-owner identity is an important part of my self-image,” “Gun-ownership is an important reflection of who I am,” “Gun-ownership has very little to do with how I feel about myself,” and “Gun-ownership is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.” Responses were coded so that they were directionally consistent. The questions loaded onto one factor with an eigenvalue of 1.936. Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.765. The scale ranges from 1-21, with 1 being a gun owner whose gun ownership is not a significant piece of his or her identity and 21 being a gun owner who has a high gun owner identity.

My final independent variable, the experimental condition, is an interaction variable between gun ownership and the experimental condition of interest. As aforementioned, the white survey participants were either shown a blue square, a light-skinned man holding a gun, or a dark-skinned man holding a gun. Approximately one third of participants (560) received the control condition, one third (563) received the condition of a light-skinned man holding a gun,

and one third (542) received the condition of a dark-skinned man holding a gun. The experimental condition of a dark-skinned man holding a gun is dichotomous relative to the control group, so that respondents were coded 1 if they received the treatment of a darker man holding a gun (32.55% of the sample) and 0 if they received the control condition (33.63% of the sample). Those who received the second condition (an image of a light-skinned man holding a gun) were counted as missing. Those respondents account for 33.81% of the sample. The condition of interest is multiplied by gun ownership in order to capture the difference between gun owners who received the experimental condition to those who did not. 45.02% of those who received the treatment of interest (a dark-skinned man holding a gun) were gun owners.

Scholars have consistently seen the following variables as influencing both gun ownership and racial resentment. I therefore control for these alternative explanations of their relationship: sex (Goss 2017; Parker et al. 2017; Virtanen and Huddy 1998), ideology and partisanship (Feldman and Huddy 2005; Morin 2014; Pederson et al. 2015; Spitzer 2015), income (Pederson et al. 2015; Spitzer 2015; Virtanen and Huddy 1998), education and age (Pederson et al. 2015; Spitzer 2015; Virtanen and Huddy 1998), religion (Beachler 2007; Yamane 2016; Young 1989) and region (Dixon and Lizotte 1987; Ellison 1991; Felson and Pare 2010; Marciniak and Loftin 1991). Ideology is measured using a 7-point scale ranging from Strong Liberal (1) – Strong Conservative (7). Partisanship is measured as a dummy variable, Republican or not Republican. Income is measured ordinally, from lower income brackets to higher income brackets. Education is measured by years of completed education, beginning with high school.

Religion is measured in terms of church attendance, measured on a 6-point scale. Region is measured as a dummy variable, South or not South.

Methodology

I construct several different regression models to test my hypotheses. I first utilize ordered logistic regression to test my first and second hypotheses. This method is appropriate as my dependent variable of interest, racial resentment, is measured ordinally. I calculate the marginal effects of each variable of interest in both models to show the change in racial resentment scores when predictor variables move from their minimum to their maximum.

Then, I utilize ordered logistic regression to test my third hypothesis. This method is most appropriate as my dependent variable measuring gun access policy is measured ordinally. I perform a regression that calculates the effects of an interaction variable between gun ownership, the experimental condition of interest, and racial resentment, and all relevant controls on my dependent variable, gun access policy.

Results

I utilize ordered logistical regressions to investigate the relationship between gun ownership, gun owner identity, racial resentment, and gun policy opinion. Table 1 exhibits results from my analysis of the University of Kansas Gun Owner Population Survey measuring the impact of gun ownership and gun owner identity on racial resentment.

Central to my theory is the idea that gun ownership is associated with higher racial resentment, independent of other relevant predictors put forth in the literature. In addition to my ordered logistical regression analysis, I provide a marginal effect measure that shows the change in racial resentment scores when predictor variables move from their minimum to their

maximum. Model 1 displays my regression analysis and the impact of variables on racial resentment

The effects of gun ownership ($b = 0.693$, $p < 0.001$), gender ($b = -0.349$, $p < 0.001$), region ($b = 0.219$, $p < 0.05$), ideology ($b = 0.498$, $p < 0.001$), political party identification ($b = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$), education ($b = -0.162$, $p < 0.001$), income ($b = -0.048$, $p < 0.05$), and age ($b = 0.013$, $p < 0.001$) are all statistically significant predictors of racial resentment. The effects that achieved significance all have positive relationships with racial resentment, apart from gender, education, and income.

Table 1: Racial Resentment Regression Output Table

	Gun Ownership Estimate (1)	Marginal Effects Estimate (2)	Gun Identity Estimate (3)	Marginal Effects Estimate (4)
Gun Owner	0.693*** (0.094)	- 0.008*** (0.002)	.	.
Gun Identity Scale	.	.	0.074*** (0.015)	-0.001** (0.000)
Female	-0.349*** (0.089)	0.004*** (0.001)	-0.319* (0.137)	0.003' (0.002)
Southern	0.219* (0.090)	-0.002* (0.001)	0.063 (0.133)	-0.001 (0.001)
Church Attendance	0.002 (0.028)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.046 (0.041)	0.000 (0.000)
Rural Continuum	0.037 (0.027)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.014 (0.039)	0.000 (0.000)
Ideology	0.498*** (0.034)	-0.006*** (0.001)	0.342*** (0.048)	-0.003** (0.001)
Republican	0.347*** (0.108)	-0.004 ** (0.001)	0.215 (0.150)	-0.002 (0.001)
Education	-0.162*** (0.033)	0.002*** (0.001)	-0.071 (0.053)	0.001 (0.001)
Income	-0.048* (0.022)	0.001* (0.000)	-0.054 (0.036)	0.000 (0.000)
Age	0.013*** (0.003)	- 0.000*** (0.000)	0.011* (0.005)	0.000' (0.000)
N	1665	1665	728	728

Standard Errors in Parantheses

' $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Dependent Variable: Racial Resentment Scale

Source: University of Kansas Gun Owner Population Survey

Model 2 exhibits the relative influence of all included variables on the racial resentment scale. The marginal effects show that personal gun ownership (-0.008) exerts a greater influence on the racial resentment scale than region (-0.002), ideology (-0.006), and party identification (-0.004). Given the significant attention given to these conventional predictors of racial resentment in the literature, the fact that gun ownership's effect is larger than all other predictors in the model is noteworthy.

I additionally present a new theory of gun ownership in American that establishes this practice as the foundation of a social identity. I argue this gun owner identity correlates with racial resentment, where increased identity levels lead to increased resentment levels. Once again, I utilize ordered logistic regression in order to test this theory and I strengthen my argument with the provision of a marginal effects measure. Model 3 mirrors Model 1, with the inclusion of a gun owner identity scale in place of a gun ownership measure. The effects of gun owner identity ($b = 0.074$, $p < 0.001$), gender ($b = -0.319$, $p < 0.05$), ideology ($b = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$), and age ($b = 0.011$, $p < 0.05$) are all significant predictors of racial resentment, with all statistically significant effects being positive correlated with racial resentment apart from gender.

Model 4 exhibits the relative influence of all included variables on the racial resentment scale. The marginal effects show that gun owner identity (-0.001) exerts a greater influence on the racial resentment scale than rural residence (-0.000), income (0.000), and age (0.000). The influence of gun owner identity is greater than or equal to all predictors apart from gender (0.003), ideology (-0.003), and partisanship (-0.002).

I then sought to understand the impact of the embedded experiment on gun access policy opinion. I am especially interested in the impact that the experiment had on gun owners. When white gun owners are primed to think of those owning a firearm as men of color, do their policy opinions shift?

Table 2 exhibits results from my analysis of the University of Kansas Gun Owner Population Survey measuring the impact of the embedded experiment on gun access policy opinion. Model 1 serves as a baseline model, excluding the experimental variables and interaction terms. In this model, the effects of gun ownership ($b = -0.935$, $p < 0.001$), gender ($b = 0.577$, $p < 0.001$), ideology ($b = -0.345$, $p < 0.001$), party identification ($b = -0.274$, $p < 0.05$), income ($b = 0.0494$, $p < 0.10$), and age ($b = 0.10$, $p < 0.01$) are all significant predictors of gun access opinion. The directions of the relationships are expected: gun owners, conservatives, and Republicans call for the government to make it easier for individuals to access guns, while women call for the government to make it harder for individuals to access guns.

Table 2: Experimental Condition Regression Output Table

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Gun Access	Gun Access	Gun Access	Gun Access	Gun Access	Gun Access
Gunowner	-0.935*** (-8.68)	-0.862*** (-6.42)	-1.047*** (-5.67)	-1.267** (-2.91)	-1.232** (-2.81)	-1.050*** (-6.14)
Female	0.577*** (5.55)	0.548*** (4.19)	0.545*** (4.17)	0.549*** (4.19)	0.555*** (4.24)	0.549*** (4.19)
South	0.0925 (0.88)	0.0907 (0.69)	0.0942 (0.72)	0.0953 (0.72)	0.0876 (0.66)	0.0916 (0.70)
Church Attendance	-0.0370 (-1.15)	-0.0621 (-1.53)	-0.0616 (-1.52)	-0.0606 (-1.49)	-0.0638 (-1.57)	-0.0620 (-1.53)
Rural Continuum	-0.0102 (-0.33)	-0.0156 (-0.40)	-0.0165 (-0.42)	-0.0143 (-0.36)	-0.0152 (-0.38)	-0.0151 (-0.38)
Ideology	-0.345*** (-8.81)	-0.232*** (-4.52)	-0.234*** (-4.56)	-0.234*** (-4.55)	-0.233*** (-4.53)	-0.234*** (-4.55)
Republican	-0.274* (-2.22)	-0.216 (-1.40)	-0.211 (-1.37)	-0.206 (-1.33)	-0.198 (-1.28)	-0.200 (-1.30)
Education	0.0633 (1.62)	0.0485 (0.99)	0.0516 (1.06)	0.0504 (1.03)	0.0490 (1.00)	0.0507 (1.04)
Income	0.0494' (1.96)	0.0390 (1.22)	0.0381 (1.20)	0.0388 (1.21)	0.0383 (1.20)	0.0377 (1.18)
Age	0.00983** (2.66)	0.0170*** (3.66)	0.0171*** (3.68)	0.0172*** (3.70)	0.0174*** (3.74)	0.0172*** (3.70)
Condition		0.0396 (0.32)	-0.146 (-0.82)	-0.147 (-0.82)	-0.669' (-1.65)	-0.161 (-0.96)
Resentment		-0.107*** (-6.22)	-0.106*** (-6.20)	-0.114*** (-5.03)	-0.137*** (-4.92)	-0.114*** (-6.45)
Condition x Gun Owner			0.371 (1.47)	0.373 (1.48)	0.305 (1.19)	
Gun Owner x Resentment				0.0172 (0.56)	0.0172 (0.56)	
Condition x Resentment					0.0440 (1.44)	
Condition x Gun Owner x Resentment						0.0299' (1.79)
_cons	0.836 (1.14)	-0.176 (-0.19)	-0.230 (-0.25)	-0.317 (-0.33)	-0.614 (-0.63)	-0.337 (-0.36)
N	1665	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102

t statistics in parentheses

' $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Dependent Variable: Gun Access Policy

Source: University of Kansas Gun Owner Population Survey

Model 2 builds on Model 1 through the addition of the experimental condition (a dark-skinned man holding a gun) and the racial resentment scale. The results do not significantly

differ from Model 1. Racial resentment ($b = -0.106$, $p < 0.001$) is a significant predictor of gun access opinion, with those who are more racially resentful calling for the government to make it easier to buy guns.

Models 3, 4 and 5 include the two-way interactions relevant to my three-way interaction of interest, added one at a time. The interactions include gun owners who received the experimental condition of interest, gun owners interacted with their racial resentment scores, and those who received the experimental condition of interest interacted with their racial resentment scores. None of these interactions were significant nor impacted the relative results of the other predictors.

Model 6 is the main model of interest as it observes the interaction between gun owners, the experimental condition of an image of a dark-skinned man holding a gun, and racial resentment. This model also includes all relevant controls. The effect of the key interaction variable is both positive ($b = 0.0299$) and statistically significant at the 0.10 level ($p < 0.10$). Gun ownership alone ($b = -1.050$, $p < 0.001$), gender ($b = 0.549$, $p < 0.001$), ideology ($b = -0.234$, $p < 0.001$), age ($b = 0.0172$, $p < 0.001$), and racial resentment ($b = -0.114$, $p < 0.001$) are also significant predictors of gun access opinion, with women and older individuals calling for the government to make it harder for individuals to buy guns and gun owners, conservatives, and racially resentful individuals calling for it to be easier.

The results suggest that highly racially resentful gun owners who saw a dark-skinned man holding a gun called for the government to make it harder to purchase guns, the opposite of how gun owners who did not receive the experimental condition of interest generally responded. The theory follows that when gun owners are primed to think of those attempting

to buy guns as people of color, racially resentful attitudes are activated and they wish for this process to be harder. This result reverses what we would traditionally expect of gun owners; that they would want the purchase of guns to be easier for all Americans.

Discussion

My results support my first, second and third prediction. First, gun ownership has a significant and positive relationship with racial resentment, where gun owners are more likely to score high on the racial resentment scale. Moreover, these results are especially significantly compared to other relevant predictors, displaying a stronger effect on racial resentment than all other variables. The results confirm what the literature has only begun to suggest: that gun ownership has a distinct relationship with racial resentment in this country. I suggest that this relationship is derived from a shared culture and language between gun owners and those who hold racially resentful opinions. Both groups value individualism (Kahan and Braman 2003b; McConahay and Hough 1976), power (Kahan and Braman 2003b), and self-reliance (Halbrook 1994). They share an affinity for that which is traditionally and stereotypically American (McConahay and Hough 1976) and conservative (Filindra and Kaplan 2016).

My second hypothesis is similarly confirmed: those with a higher gun owner identity display higher levels of racial resentment. The magnitude of this relationship appears to be weaker than that of gun ownership itself, but it remains significant. This hypothesis flows naturally from my first. If gun owners and those who hold racially resentful opinions are similar, then the increased attachment to the first group ought to lead to increased strength of opinion among the second. My analysis suggests this is indeed the case. Moreover, my study validates the study of gun ownership as a distinct social identity. Understanding the psychological roots

of this emergent concept holds distinct implications for the study of American politics and public policy alike.

My third hypothesis is confirmed as analysis shows that the experiment does have an effect on gun owners who are racially resentful and who received the condition of interest. When gun owners who are highly racially resentful saw a dark-skinned man holding a gun, they were primed to think of gun owners as people of color when asked about gun access. In other words, certain racial attitudes were activated when the experimental treatment was exposed. Whereas gunowners who are not primed to think of race expectedly called for the government to make it easier for individuals to access guns, individuals who are primed to think of gun owners as dark-skinned men call for the government to make it harder to access guns. I suggest that shared gun owner attitudes and behaviors differ significantly along the lines of race. For white gun owners, seeing an image of a dark-skinned man holding a gun most likely connotated a member of the out-group and therefore expected attitudes shifted to the point of reversal. My results suggest that majority gun owners see themselves as different than minority gun owners – subject to different rules and policies. Gun owners want easier access regarding the purchasing of guns, but only when those seeking access fit their expectations; only if those seeking access are white.

Limitations and Future Study

My study carries with it unique limitations. Mainly, there are concerns surrounding internal validity. There are myriad variables that explain both gun ownership and racial resentment and cannot be controlled for. One can imagine how neighborhood, family history and other contextual factors influence both an individual's propensity to own a gun, his or her

attachment to that gun, and his or her likelihood of holding racially resentful attitudes. While I include control variables in my model to minimize this threat, it is a concern worth noting.

I call for additional experimental research that allows for further exploration of racial priming among gun owners. I have conjectured what I believe is occurring, but more research is needed before making an in-group/out-group claim. Were participants primed to think about crime when they saw a man of color holding a gun? Or terrorism? Or fear? I believe research could gain from understanding the psychological components of racial priming among gun owners.

I additionally call for future study to further establish the validity of a unique, gun-owning identity. A significant piece of the social identity literature is the identification of an out-group. For gun owners, it is unclear who that out-group is. I suggest here that those seemingly anti-gun are the out-group for gun owners, but more empirical study is needed to understand these dynamics, especially along the lines of race. Are only white, gun owners included in the in-group? What does this mean for black gun owners? These questions remain at the conclusion of my study.

Conclusion

Society continues to explore the cultural dynamics of race and gun ownership in this country. Tragedies like the deaths of Jemel Roberson and Philando Castile expose the exclusion of black gun owners from American gun culture today. This study seeks to understand the social roots of divergent racial attitudes of gun owners, filling a distinct and interesting gap in the literature. By observing views on guns and racial resentment through both a gun culture and a

social identity lens, one can understand how gun ownership and a gun owning identity are variables capable of prediction.

At the very least, my study supports common cultural claims that gun owners often hold racially resentful attitudes. Moreover, these attitudes hold implications for public policy opinion. When gun owners are primed to think about race, their opinions on gun control shift in unexpected ways. As black gun owners are systematically excluded from America's gun culture, as we saw in the aftermath of Philando Castile's death and may yet see in weeks following the death of Jemel Roberson, it is important and worthy to study the relationship between racial resentment, gun ownership, and gun owning identity in the United States.

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